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A Strange Reader.

(Springing Well.)

It was a lovely afternoon, years ago, that we left the Thames, bound for Scotland. We were accompanied by an energetic, impulsive, Christian Scotchman, who sought every possible opportunity, in season and out, to speak for his Master and Lord.

Very remarkable, it was, that we should be on the steamer together, for our friend had really taken his passage by another but arrived just in time to see her leave the dock. The engine-bell had sounded as a signal for our vessel to start, too; the gangway was about to be withdrawn when he reached the wharf against which we were

The exhilarating influences of the delightful sea-breezes we enjoyed to the full until the sun went down on that Saturday evening; a calm, wonderful starlight night followed. We rose early on Sunday morning, and were soon on deck with our hearts filled with gratitude to God for all his loving care and tender mercy.

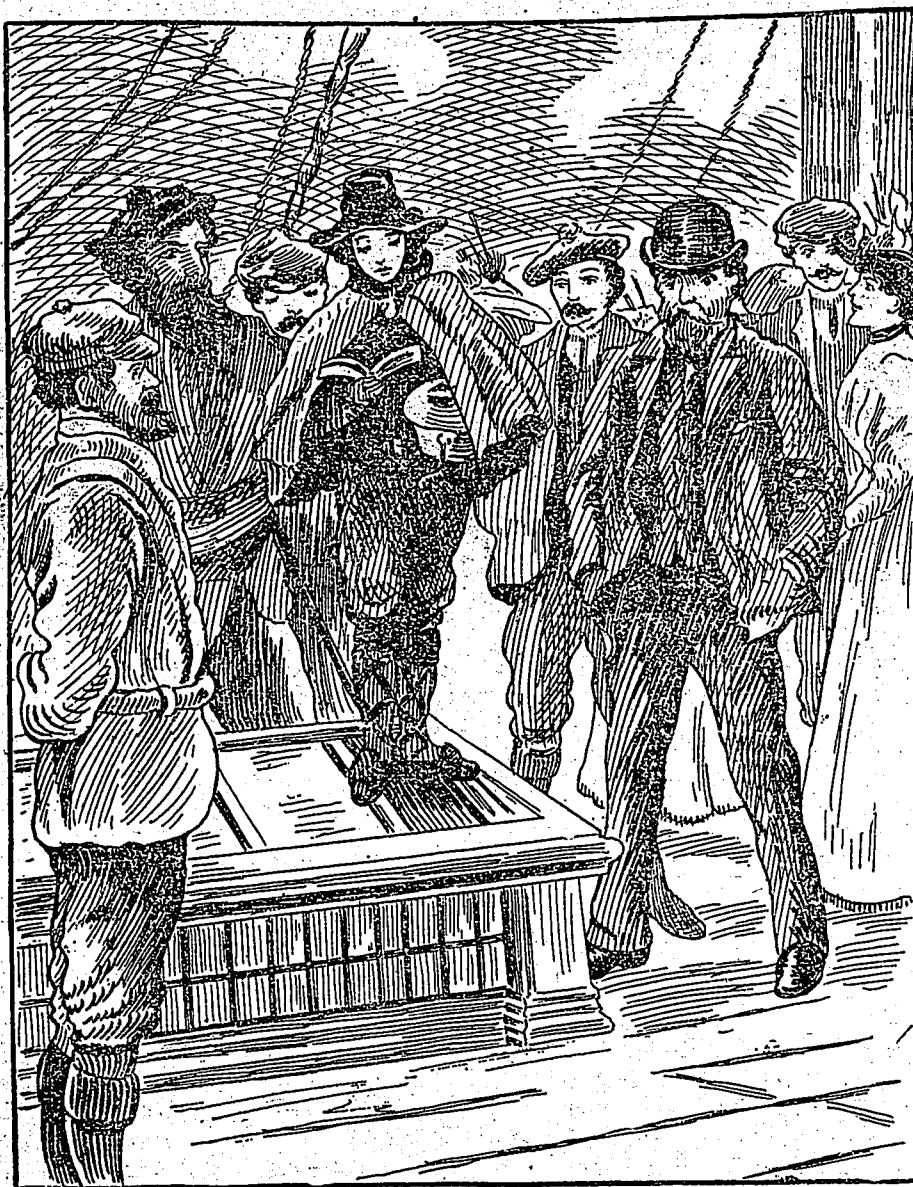
There was no opportunity for any public testimony during the morning, but we had an enjoyable hour of scripture reading and song, in a quiet corner of the ship, with two or three Christian friends with whom we were acquainted. We, however, longed for a chance to tell all our fellow-passengers of the Saviour Christ, and asked the captain if

'Look here, gentlemen, if you are going to talk Christianity on this steamer, my friends and myself mean to oppose you, so make no mistake about it!' The speaker was a man of medium height, with restless, deep set, dark eyes; with a somewhat sallow and unhappy expression; a fact that altogether betokened a mind filled with doubt, if not with dark despair. We were surprised at his speech, because so far we had given no definite indication of our intention to 'talk Christianity,' as he termed it. However, we surmised that the captain had told him of our request, and we replied in conciliatory language, 'Well, my friend, you might wait till we began, but we do hope to have a simple gospel service, and shall be pleased to see you and your friends present at it.' Our kindly answer, however, had but little effect, for he left us, sullenly murmuring to himself what he would do 'to stop that kind of thing when they were away for a little holiday.'

During the previous afternoon we had especially noticed a little Italian boy. He was attired in the customary picturesque garb—a little Tyrolese hat, a blue cape thrown around his shoulders, and his legs encased in the strange twisted bands usually worn by these wandering minstrels. He had a little organette, on which he played at times, and occasionally accompanied it with a soft and simple melody—one of the songs of his own land. The boy moved about the deck, and his quiet, polite demeanour attracted our attention, and we spoke to him and encouraged him a little, and found to our great pleasure that he could read and speak English quite fluently. On the Lord's day, however, his little organette was silent. He ran about the deck and clasped it as if he loved it dearly; but not a sound, sacred or secular, was heard from the strange little instrument all that day.

We had remarked this, and wondered what was the reason. However, just as the passenger we have described moved away from us, he noticed the little Italian boy, and approaching him, said, 'Here's a penny for you—play me the 'Marseillaise.' The boy looked up at him with his open, bright, and gentle face, and simply shook his head, plainly denoting that he did not wish to play. The man offered him sixpence, but the lad again politely shook his head; then he tendered a shilling and finally taking a half-crown and holding it up between his fingers, told him he would have that if he would play the 'Marseillaise'; but the child still absolutely refused. We were so impressed with the courage and determination of the little stranger that we felt sure there was some conscientious scruple animating him. We felt persuaded he was a Christian boy, and we went to him and sympathetically said, 'Will you do something for us?' At the same time we produced a pocket bible, and asked him if he would read a chapter we should choose from God's word. To our exceeding delight, the boy instantly assented. Our strong Scotch friend lifted him on to a hatchway or covered skylight, and he began to read in a clear, firm voice to many of the passengers who had gathered round, the wonderful fifteenth of Luke's Gospel.

Words fail us to describe the effect of this unusual incident. From the instant he be-



HE BEGAN TO READ IN A CLEAR FIRM VOICE.

moored, and managed, to our great gratification and surprise, at the very last instant, to get safely on board.

We believe our simple story will show that God owns even such things for his people in his own marvellous way, and if our hearts were only always prepared to 'wait patiently for him,' he would often let us see the golden chain of grace and goodness that is bound about the little life-story of every one of us.

There were many passengers on board. Some were leaving for the usual summer holiday, others were on business bent; but the scene was altogether one of the greatest animation and interest.

he would permit us to hold a meeting on the fore-deck in the afternoon. He immediately consented, provided the passengers did not object. We found, moreover, that the officer was a man who feared God, and trusted Christ for salvation, and blessing, and peace.

We then began to 'plan' very cleverly, as we imagined, how we would arrange the service, but God had gone before us, and he had 'planned,' how it should be brought about, for at that very moment a man approached the seat upon which we were sitting.

We had not previously observed him amongst the passengers; but he appeared to be excited, and addressing us, said—